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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Prime Minister Ohira's Views on Defense

The election of Masayoshi Ohira as Japan's new Prime Minister will not significantly alter the government's defense policies. A supporter of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty from its inception -- even during the years when it was under heavy attack by the political opposition -- Ohira regards the agreement as the essential element of Japanese security. He has also supported the concept that US forces in Japan are important in maintaining the security not only of Japan but of the entire Western Pacific region. Indeed, the new Prime Minister, generally known for his skills in soliciting cooperation from the opposition parties, may be in a better political position than his predecessor, Takeo Fukuda, to gain acceptance of an increase in Tokyo's financial support for US bases in Japan. While Ohira will probably not push for public acceptance of an expanded role for Japan's Self Defense Forces, the stronger public consensus in favor of current Japanese security policy will provide the Prime Minister with a more favorable atmosphere for dealing with defense issues in general.

This memorandum was prepared by the East Asia-Pacific Division of the Office of Regional and Political Analysis. Questions and comments may be addressed to [redacted]

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SECRET

Ohira reportedly has indicated his willingness to revise Article 24 of the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement, enabling Tokyo to assume increased financial responsibility for the maintenance of US forces in Japan.* Because of the decline of the dollar, Japan's huge trade surplus and the annual \$1 billion cost of maintaining US forces, the base cost-sharing issue has become a prominent one. The Japanese Government has been gradually increasing its share of the expenses, but has been reluctant to substantially augment its payments because of potential domestic political repercussions. Last year, Tokyo's contribution included an equivalent of \$500 million for the US forces rent-free use of base land and \$26 million for base-related social services. Even such limited payments, however, have met with resistance from the opposition parties. Not all of the opposition parties have yet declared their public support for the treaty,

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Although Ohira favors augmenting the capabilities of the SDF and improving their quality, he has been more reluctant than other conservative leaders to advocate any reduction of tight civilian control over the SDF. He remains critical of proposals for new emergency legislation, which were made following the resignation of Hiromi Kurisu, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. At a press conference this past summer, Kurisu had stated that a front-line commander might have to take supralegal action if Japan were attacked because the

**Article 24 stipulates that Japan is not to share expenses for rebuilding, repair and new construction of on-base facilities. In 1973, however, Ohira who was foreign minister at the time, testified in a liberal interpretation of the article that relocation or substitute construction of existing US facilities could be undertaken by the Japanese Government.*

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existing law does not allow the SDF to act without undertaking time-consuming consultations with the prime minister and the Diet. In contrast to the other candidates' views favoring new emergency legislation during the Liberal Democratic Party presidential campaign last month, Ohira consistently stated that there is no need for such a law. The Prime Minister added, however, that he is prepared to revise the current law if military technology and/or the international situation dictate a change. [REDACTED]

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Growing public support--due primarily to a conscious government campaign--for the SDF, the treaty, and for Japan's defense policies in general, have impelled two major opposition parties to shift their position on defense issues during this past year. [REDACTED] the Japan Socialist Party, which upheld the principle of "unarmed neutrality" for over three decades, finally recognized the SDF as "public servants in charge of national defense." Increased public acceptance of the SDF generally stops short of expanding the forces and revising the constitution. While this is consistent with Ohira's views, he is also keenly aware of the current broader consensus in support of Japan's military security, and as Prime Minister is not likely to attempt to reverse this trend. [REDACTED]

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